FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
GRANT APPLICATION

(Please fill in the highlighted areas)
all sections (IA, IB, IC, etc.) must be addressed or the application will be considered invalid

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

A. Applicant Name: Bitter Root Water Forum

B. Mailing Address: PO Box 1247

C. City: Hamilton State: MT Zip: 59840

Telephone: 406-375-2272 E-mail: heather@brwaterforum.org

D. Contact Person: Heather Barber

Address if different from Applicant:

City: State: Zip:

Telephone: E-mail:

E. Landowner and/or Lessee Name (if other than Applicant): Paula Wetzsteon

Mailing Address: 2522 McCrea Rd

City: Thousand Oaks State: CA Zip: 91362

Telephone: NA E-mail: NA

II. PROJECT INFORMATION*

A. Project Name: Riparian Fencing, Revegetation + Grazing Management = Temperature and Sediment Reduction on the East Fork

River, stream, or lake: East Fork Bitterroot River

Location: Township: 1N Range: 19W Section: 10
Latitude: 45.8448°N Longitude: 113.9466°W *within project (decimal degrees)*

County: Ravalli

B. Purpose of Project:

Improve habitat for westslope cutthroat and bull trout by reducing sediment and thermal pollution to the East Fork of the Bitterroot River by fencing a riparian corridor and increasing woody riparian vegetation along river banks to create a healthy riparian buffer.

C. Brief Project Description:

The East Fork Bitterroot River flowing through the Lazy J Cross property has been identified as a corridor with high potential for restoration. A lack of woody riparian vegetation and past channelization contributes to sediment and thermal loading in this reach (Montana DEQ 2005). This project will reduce sediment and thermal pollution by increasing woody riparian vegetation along river banks. This section of the river was channelized in the past; however, this reach is beginning to develop meanders via lateral cutting, and point bars are developing as sediment deposits. Some newly developed point bars are protected from grazing and support young willows and cottonwoods. Other point bars have the potential for willow and cottonwood establishment, and therefore provide locations to actively create vegetative communities through planting and seeding. As these point bars have developed, the river has created a small inset floodplain that provides some energy dissipation during high flows. The resulting reduction in shear stress provides an opportunity to revegetate portions of the river bank, creating better fish habitat.

To improve conditions and treat degradation we will: install 4,050 linear feet of riparian fencing to protect 2,000 feet of the East Fork Bitterroot River from cattle and other browse, immediately preventing further degradation of the riparian area; install 460 nursery plants and 150 live shrub transplants to enhance and repair the riparian area, providing shade to the temperature impaired stream, and creating woody vegetation along the banks that will reduce the current amount of excessive sediment delivery to the stream.

D. Length of stream or size of lake that will be treated: .5 miles

E. Project Budget:

Grant Request (Dollars): $ 15207

Contribution by Applicant (Dollars): $ _____ In-kind $ _____

(salaries of government employees are not considered as matching contributions)

Contribution from other Sources (Dollars): $ _____ $ 39555

(attach verification - See page 2 budget template)

$ 54762

F. Attach itemized (line item) budget – see template

G. Attach specific project plans, detailed sketches, plan views, photographs, maps, evidence of landowner consent, evidence of public support and fish biologist support, and/or other information necessary to evaluate the merits of the project. If project involves water leasing or water salvage complete supplemental questionnaire (fwp.mt.gov/habitat/futurefisheries/supplement2.doc).

H. Attach land management and maintenance plans that will ensure protection of the reclaimed area.

III. PROJECT BENEFITS*

A. What species of fish will benefit from this project?:

Bull trout, Westslope Cutthroat trout

B. How will the project protect or enhance wild fish habitat?:

The East Fork of the Bitterroot River is listed as impaired by DEQ for both sediment and temperature. The opportunity to work on a property like this --which contains a mile of the East Fork --is incredibly rare, especially in the Bitterroot. Working on a restoration project on a property/reach this scale will be the most effective action we can take to combat sediment and temperature impairments on the East Fork of the Bitterroot River which

C. Will the project improve fish populations and/or fishing? To what extent?:

By improving habitat, working at the source to provide share and reduce stream temperatures, we hope to improve fish populations and by extension, fishing.

D. Will the project increase public fishing opportunity for wild fish and, if so, how?:

The project will not increase places of access but will ultimately support fish populations thereby increasing opportunity to catch fish.

The project agreement includes a 20-year maintenance commitment. Please discuss your ability to meet this commitment.

The landowners are incredibly dedicated to this property; in 2015 they completed a conservation easement preserving the property in perpetuity. Portions of the easement dictate how the land must be managed and maintained. BRWF will work closely with the family and the Bitter Root Land Trust to develop a maintenance plan that works for them and involves direct involvement from BRWF volunteers and staff.

F. What was the cause of habitat degradation in the area of this project and how will the project correct the cause?:

Historically, the riparian area has been over grazed and there is virtually no vegetation supporting and sustaining the banks; however a bit of cottonwood generation in a recently quarantined area shows there is hope for recovery. The family is ready to make changes to the land management which will keep cattle from eating riparian vegetation and trampling the streambank, and will reduce wildlife browse as well. This project will drastically change the face of the area.

G. What public benefits will be realized from this project?:

The East Fork is a public waterway and headwaters to the Bitterroot, so public benefits are many. Aside from the obvious benefits of improving local stream health, this effort will show local commitment to improving stream health in the headwaters of the Bitterroot. This could lead to engagement of area landowners for further project development and implementation in the future.

The Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research has concluded that temperature changes in fisheries have a direct impact on tourism dollars. In recent years, increased temperatures in streams has forced Montana Department of Fish Wildlife, & Parks to close streams to fishing, a significant contributor of tourism dollars to Bitterroot Valley communities. ("Climate Change and Tourism". Montana Department of Environmental Quality. 2011. Web. deq.mt.gov). Improving stream temperatures in the East Fork Bitterroot River will help to ensure a healthy fishery and less chance for mandated closures affecting the local economy.

H. Will the project interfere with water or property rights of adjacent landowners? (explain):

No. This project will not interfere in any way with water or property rights of adjacent landowners.

I. Will the project result in the development of commercial recreational use on the site?: (explain):

No

J. Is this project associated with the reclamation of past mining activity?:

No

Each approved project sponsor must enter into a written agreement with the Department specifying terms and duration of the project.

IV. AUTHORIZING STATEMENT

I (we) hereby declare that the information and all statements to this application are true, complete, and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge and that the project or activity complies with rules of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

Applicant Signature: Heather Barber Date: 11/21/16

Sponsor (if applicable):

***Highlighted boxes will automatically expand.**

Mail To: **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**
Habitat Protection Bureau
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

E-mail To: **Michelle McGree**
mmcgree@mt.gov
(electronic submissions MUST be signed)

Incomplete or late applications will be rejected and returned to applicant.
Applications may be rejected if this form is modified.

*****Applications may be submitted at anytime, but must be signed and received by the Future Fisheries Program Officer in Helena before December 1 and June 1 of each year to be considered for the subsequent funding period.*****

East Fork Bitterroot River riparian fencing & revegetation 003-2017

BUDGET TEMPLATE SHEET FOR FUTURE FISHERIES PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

Both tables must be completed or the application will be returned

WORK ITEMS (ITEMIZE BY CATEGORY)	NUMBER OF UNITS	UNIT DESCRIPTION*	COST/UNIT	TOTAL COST	CONTRIBUTIONS			
					FUTURE FISHERIES REQUEST	IN-KIND SERVICES**	IN-KIND CASH	TOTAL
Personnel* **								
Survey				$ -				$ -
Design				$ -				$ -
Engineering	1	Lump Sum	$2,500.00	$ 2,500.00			2,500.00	$ 2,500.00
Permitting	1	Prep + submit	$300.00	$ 300.00	300.00			$ 300.00
Oversight	100	hours	$50.00	$ 5,000.00			5,000.00	$ 5,000.00
Monitoring	50	hours	$50.00	$ 2,500.00	1,000.00		1,500.00	$ 2,500.00
			Sub-Total	$ 10,300.00	$ 1,300.00	$ -	$ 9,000.00	$ 10,300.00
Travel								
Mileage	10	Round trips	$40.70	$ 407.00	407.00			$ 407.00
Per diem				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ 407.00	$ 407.00	$ -	$ -	$ 407.00
Construction Materials****								
Fencing	4050	feet	$3.00	$ 12,150.00	6,075.00		6,075.00	$ 12,150.00
Plants	460	each	$5.00	$ 2,300.00	1,300.00		1,000.00	$ 2,300.00
Browse Protector unit + installation	330	each	$35.00	$ 11,550.00	2,000.00	5,550.00	4,000.00	$ 11,550.00
Live Shrubs purchace + acquisition	150	each	$75.00	$ 11,250.00		5,500.00	5,750.00	$ 11,250.00
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ 37,250.00	$ 9,375.00	$ 11,050.00	$ 16,825.00	$ 37,250.00
Equipment and Labor								
Excavator op.	25	hours	$125.00	$ 3,125.00	3,125.00			$ 3,125.00
Plant Installation	460	each	$8.00	$ 3,680.00	1,000.00	2,680.00		$ 3,680.00
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ 6,805.00	$ 4,125.00	$ 2,680.00	$ -	$ 6,805.00
Mobilization								
				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -

(Revised 11/21/2016)

BUDGET TEMPLATE SHEET FOR FUTURE FISHERIES PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

				$ -				$ -
				$ -				$ -
			Sub-Total	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
			TOTALS	$ 54,762.00	$ 15,207.00	$ 13,730.00	$ 25,825.00	$ 54,762.00

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

All of the columns in the budget table and the matching contribution table MUST be completed appropriately or the application will be invalid. Please see the example budget sheet for additional clarification.

*Units = feet, hours, inches, etc. Do not use lump sum unless there is no other way to describe the costs.

**Can include in-kind materials. Justification for in-kind labor (e.g. hourly rates used for calculations). Describe here or in text.

Reminder: Government salaries cannot be used as in-kind match

***The Review Panel suggests that design and oversight costs associated with a proposed project not exceed 15% of the total project budget. If design and oversight costs are in excess of 15%, applications must include a minimum of two competitive bids for the cost of undertaking the project.

****The Review Panel recommends a maximum fencing cost of $1.50 per foot. Additional costs may be the responsibility of the applicant and/or partners.

MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS (do not include requested funds)

CONTRIBUTOR	IN-KIND SERVICE	IN-KIND CASH	TOTAL	Secured? (Y/N)
MT Dept. of Environmental Quality	$ -	$ 19,750.00	$ 19,750.00	Y
Bitterroot Trout Unlimited/Private Donor	$ -	$ 6,075.00	$ 6,075.00	N
Volunteers - "Secured" because we have always had volunteers step up to assist on projects and feel confident we will have no problem with this	$ 8,230.00	$ -	$ 8,230.00	Y
Live Shrubs - portion sourced from a nearby ditch	$ 5,500.00	$ -	$ 5,500.00	Y
		$ -	$ -	Y
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
	$ -	$ -	$ -	
TOTALS	$ 13,730.00	$ 25,825.00	$ 39,555.00	

Geum
Environmental
Consulting, Inc.

307 State Street
P.O. Box 1956
Hamilton, MT 59840
Phone: (406) 363-2353, Fax (406) 363-3015
http://www.geumconsulting.com

September 23, 2016

To: Heather Barber, Bitter Root Water Forum

From: Tom Parker, Principal Ecologist and Alyssa Gulley, Restoration Specialist

Re: Lazy J Cross Preliminary Restoration Design

The East Fork Bitterroot River flowing through the Lazy J Cross property has been identified as a corridor with high potential for restoration. A lack of woody riparian vegetation and past channelization contributes to sediment and thermal loading in this reach (Montana DEQ 2005). The western half of the river corridor on the Lazy J Cross property, downstream from a private bridge, has been identified as the project area. This memo describes a preliminary restoration design intended to reduce sediment and thermal pollution by increasing woody riparian vegetation along river banks. Figure 1 provides an overview of the project location. Figure 2 shows proposed restoration treatments.

Existing condition and restoration potential

The project reach extends from below the bridge to the Lazy J Cross property boundary. This section of the river was channelized in the past; however, this reach is beginning to develop meanders via lateral cutting, and point bars are developing as sediment deposits. Some of these newly developed point bars are protected from grazing and support young willows and cottonwoods. Other point bars have the potential for willow and cottonwood establishment, and therefore provide locations to actively create vegetative communities through planting and seeding. As these point bars have developed, the river has created a small inset floodplain that provides some energy dissipation during high flows. The resulting reduction in shear stress provides an opportunity to revegetate portions of the river bank. The project reach has high potential to support woody riparian vegetation, but it will be necessary to protect point bars and river banks by creating a riparian pasture where livestock can be excluded while vegetation has a chance to establish. The vegetative site potential for the entire riparian corridor on the Lazy J Cross property is a black cottonwood forest with a riparian shrub understory. Tall shrubs would include several native willow species (*Salix lasiandra*. *S*. *exigua*, *S*. *geyeriana*, *S*. *bebbiana*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), gray alder (*Alnus incana*), black hawthorne (*Crataegus douglasii*), and water birch (*Betula occidentalis*). Smaller shrubs would include snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* spp.), rose (*Rosa woodsii*), and currant/gooseberry (*Ribes* spp.).

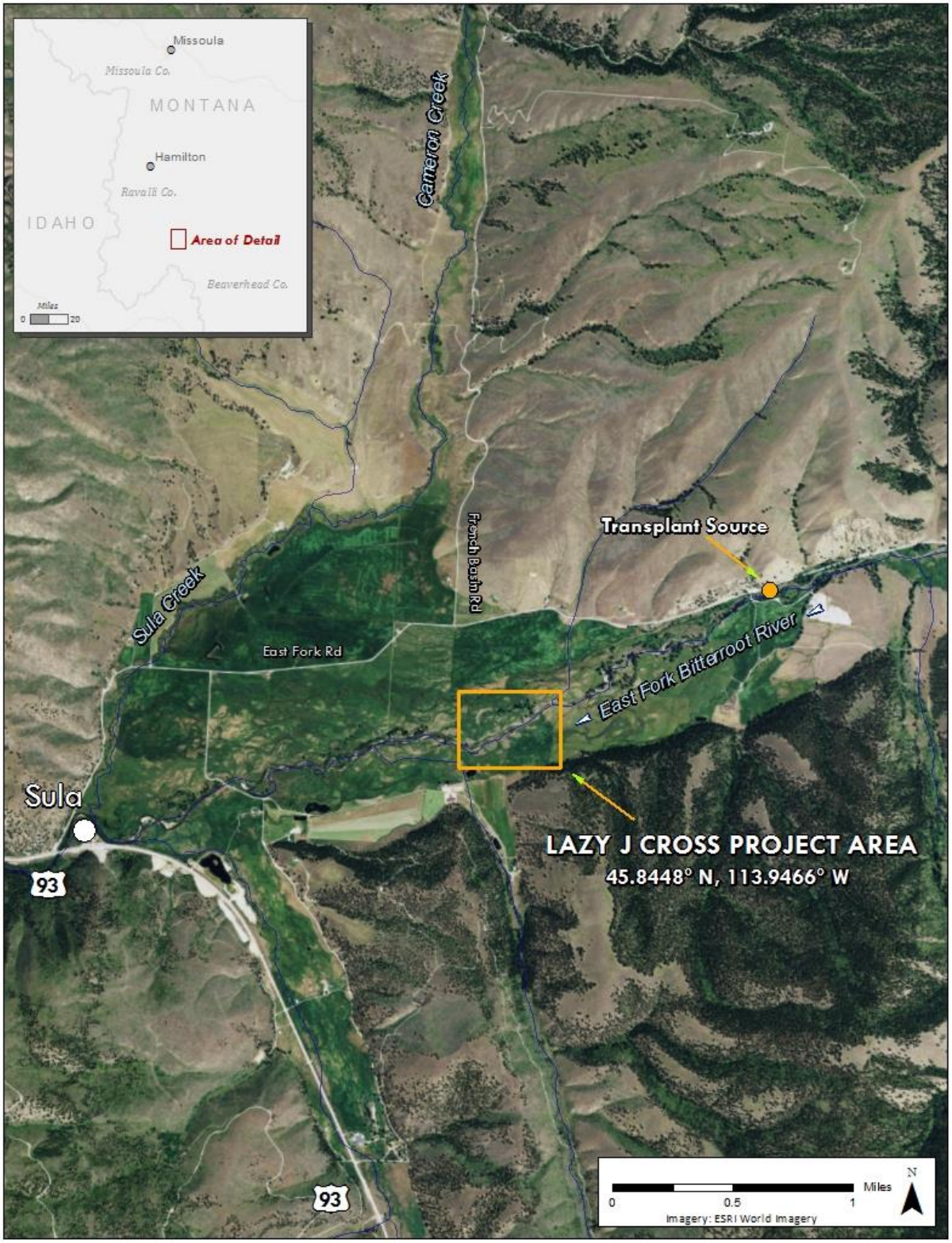

Figure 1. Overview of Lazy J Cross Ranch project location on the East Fork Bitterroot River near Sula, MT.

Preliminary restoration design elements

Riparian pasture

To allow vegetation to establish, a riparian pasture would be delineated and fenced to create a distinct area with different management objectives than adjacent pastures. The fence would be a 4 strand barbed wire livestock fence built with a minimum 30-foot buffer from the channel, 10-foot buffer from the outer edge of point bar features, and a 50-foot buffer from actively eroding banks. The riparian pasture would effectively delineate a channel migration zone which would allow river processes and associated movement to occur within a defined corridor over the long term. Initially, management objectives for the riparian pasture would focus on restoring woody vegetation to aid in reducing sedimentation and thermal pollution, in addition to supporting other functions the riparian vegetation would provide, such as habitat, food web support and water storage. Once riparian vegetation has established, the pasture could be used at certain times for livestock as part of a grazing management plan for the Lazy J Cross. Benefits to agriculture would include shade and thermal cover for livestock, and potential long-term increase in water storage and groundwater levels as riparian vegetation encroaches on and narrows the channel. Figure 2 shows potential fence locations that would define the riparian pasture.

Point bar features

Depositional bar features within the project reach provide locations hydrologically connected to the river where riparian vegetation can establish. These areas provide locations for active restoration through planting as well as passive restoration through browse protection. Areas where ground is disturbed as a result of the project would be seeded using a seed mix developed in coordination with the landowner once the final design is complete and fence locations have been finalized. All areas would need to be protected with livestock fence, and all nursery-grown plants would also be protected from wildlife using individual cages. Up to 100 individual cages would be used to protect existing trees and shrubs, and these would remain on plants until they grow tall enough to resist browse (approximately nine feet). Each individual cage is made from 5 foot tall, graduated woven wire fencing formed into a 3 foot diameter enclosure around three steel t-posts. Nursery-grown plants would include species listed in the *Existing Conditions* section above, and would be grown from appropriate western Montana seed sources. These areas are delineated on Figure 2 and described in detail below.

P1: This is a cobbly, developing point bar feature with a few willows present. Due to its low elevation and substrate, it is not suitable for planting or installing individual cages. The design would preserve existing shrubs within the riparian pasture and allow for natural recruitment of cottonwoods and willows over time.

Photo 1. P1 point bar, photo taken from upstream end looking downstream.

P2: This is a large point bar feature with an area of dense Pacific willows and sandbar willows that are heavily browsed. Some gray alders are present on higher positions, but they are mostly browsed to the ground. Up to 20 existing plants would be protected with individual cages and the rest of the point bar would be planted with up to 280 nursery grown plants, and approximately half of these (the more palatable species) would be protected with individual cages.

Photo 2. P2 point bar, photo taken from upstream end looking downstream.

P3: This is another large point bar with a smaller area of existing willows establishing on rocky substrate. Up to 20 existing plants would be protected with individual cages and the rest of the point bar would be planted with up to 180 nursery grown plants, and approximately half of these (the more palatable species) would be protected with individual cages.

Photo 3. P3 point bar, photo take from upstream end looking downstream.

P4: This area has existing woody vegetation including sandbar willow, Pacific willow, and black cottonwood that would be preserved. There is no need to plant this area, and up to 20 cages would be used to protect existing healthy plants from wildlife browse.

Photo 4. P4 point bar, photo taken from upstream end looking downstream.

P5: This is a mid-channel bar with a patch of 6-foot-tall willows that is beginning to trap debris. This feature could continue to grow and form a point bar connected to the left bank, and it is positioned correctly to support a developing meander pattern in this reach. This design, which includes setting back a bank revegetation treatment on the opposite bank in anticipation of future lateral bank movement, would allow this feature to naturally form and promote additional sinuosity in the project reach.

Photo 5. P5 mid-channel bar, photo taken from downstream end on left bank, looking upstream.

P6: This area has abundant willows that would be preserved and up to 40 plants would be protected from wildlife browse with individual cages. There is no need to plant this area.

Photo 6. P6 depositional bar, photo taken from upstream end looking downstream.

Bank revegetation

Some banks within the project reach provide an opportunity for bank revegetation to support aquatic habitat, reduce sediment delivery, and provide cover to reduce stream temperatures. Bank revegetation would utilize mature willows and alders that would be harvested as part of clearing out a ditch on an adjacent property depicted in Figure 1 ("Transplant Source"). Bank revegetation would include several components. First, a six- to ten-foot wide bench would be excavated behind the river bank during low flow, and the bench would be sloped down away from the river to the base flow elevation. A combination of mature transplants, willow cuttings and dead brush would be placed on the bench, oriented so live transplant roots and the base of willow cuttings are at the back, low end of the bench, and live branches extend over the river channel. The area behind the bank would then be backfilled to its original elevation using the material excavated to construct the bench. In some cases, banks would be set back from the existing bank line to allow room for lateral migration. The banks identified as possible revegetation locations are shown on Figure 2 and described below.

B7: A 30 foot length of this bank would be revegetated as described above, tying into the downstream end of the P3 point bar feature as a stable tie-in point. The downstream section of this bank will probably continue to move laterally as the river gains length and the opposing point bar expands. The 50 foot buffer within the riparian pasture at this location would allow for this lateral movement. While this bank erosion will contribute some sediment in the short term, woody riparian vegetation will develop on the expanding left bank point bar across from the eroding bank, resulting in long-term benefit to the aquatic and riparian habitat in this reach.

Photo 7. B7 bank location, photo taken from end of P3 point bar looking downstream.

B8: Bank B8 is located along the upstream half of a meander bend across from an island in the channel. Here, bank revegetation would tie into the P2 point bar feature, and be set back from the bank line at an increasing distance, until it is set back approximately 20 feet at the meander apex, in anticipation of future bank movement. The downstream half of this meander may continue to move laterally, so no bank revegetation is proposed along that portion of the bank.

Photo 8. B8 bank location, photo taken from end of P2 point bar looking downstream.

B9: This section of streambank would receive the bank revegetation treatment, tying into the P1 and P2 point bar features on either end and leaving a 20-foot gap around an existing cottonwood tree on the bank. Cottonwood suckers are currently present and will grow if protected from grazing. Young willows are present along the bank and will also likely expand after the riparian pasture is constructed. A point bar feature is beginning to develop across the channel, indicating this bank may migrate laterally in the future. To accommodate this, the bank revegetation treatment will be set back up to 20-feet from the existing bank line to account for lateral movement.

Photo 9. B9 bank location, photo taken from existing cottonwood tree looking downstream at the lower section of treatment area.

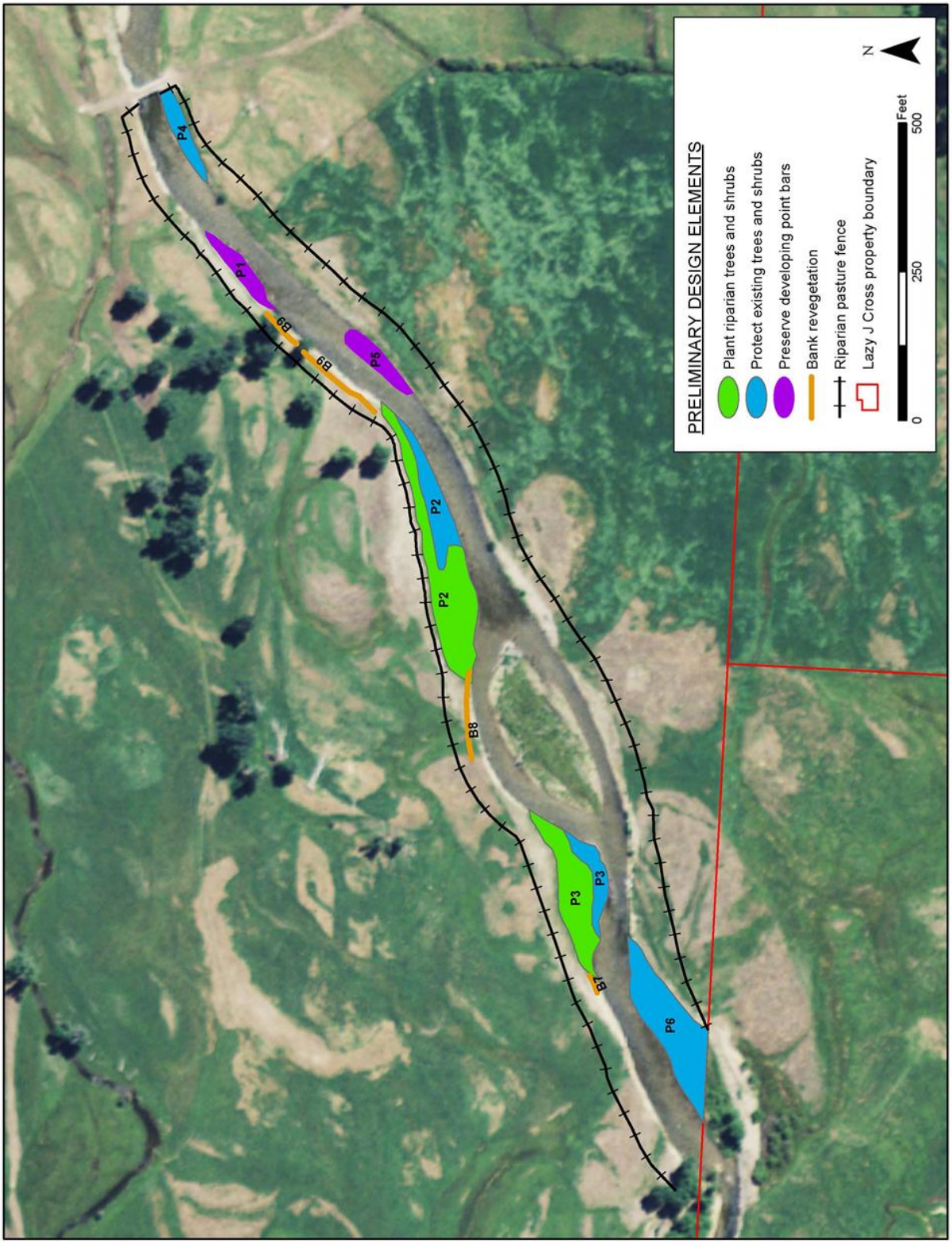

Figure 2. Proposed restoration treatments for the East Fork Bitterroot River on Lazy J Cross Ranch.

Estimated Costs

Estimated costs are shown in Table 1. Most costs are based on actual bid prices from similar restoration projects completed as part of State of Montana contracts in the last two years in western Montana. Fencing costs are mid-range costs, assuming a local fencing contractor would implement that work. These costs do not factor in potential volunteer labor that may be supplied by local conservation groups, or in-kind contributions from the landowner which may include equipment time or materials. Some costs such as seeding and mobilization are rough estimates to ensure these activities are covered as part of the budget.

Table 1. Estimated Costs for Riparian Restoration along East Fork Bitterroot River on the Lazy J Ranch.

Description	Quantity	Unit	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Comments
Livestock Fence	4050	LF	$3.00	$12,150.00	Installed cost of 4 strand barbed wire fence, includes labor and materials
Nursery Plant Installation	460	EA	$8.00	$3,680.00	TPOT1 (4"x4"x14")
Nursery Plant Material	460	EA	$5.00	$2,300.00	Plant P2 and P3 at average 8 ft spacing
Browse Protectors	330	EA	$35.00	$11,550.00	Installed cost--includes labor and materials--protect approximately 50% of nursery plants, plus 100 existing plants
Live shrub transplants	150	EA	$75.00	$11,250.00	Taken from nearby ditch, distributed in bank revegetation treatments
Seeding	2	AC	$200.00	$400.00	All disturbed areas inside fencing will be seeded. Installed cost; potential mobilization covered below
Equipment time	20	HRS	$125.00	$2,500.00	Excavator with operator to construct benches for bank revegetation treatments
Mobilization	1	LUMP SUM	$2,000.00	$2,000.00	Covers potential cost for contractors mobilizing equipment to site
Oversight support	1	LUMP SUM	$5,000.00	$5,000.00	Assist with procuring materials, staking out fencelines and planting zones, and overseeing planting crew
			Subtotal	**$50,830.00**	

References

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). 2005. Water Quality Restoration Plan and Total Maximum Daily Loads for the Bitterroot Headwaters Planning Area. Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Helena, MT.

Water Protection Bureau Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: Robert Ray
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

September 16, 2016

Dear Robert,
My name is Paula Wetzsteon and my daughters and I are the proud landowner of the Lazy J Cross property in Sula, Montana. This property has been in our family for 150 years and means so very much to us. In 2015 we officially entered into a Conservation Easement with the Bitter Root Land Trust to ensure that it will remain the gem that it is forever.
As a next step in our commitment to the conservation of this place, we have decided to enhance and restore riparian areas on the ranch. In partnership with the Bitter Root Water Forum, we will engage in the fencing and planting of nearly ½ mile of streambank, ideally leading to a thriving riparian area that will benefit stream health and improve the look and feel of our property.
With the money we have already invested in the Conservation Easement we do not have additional cash to contribute to the project at this time, but we will commit resources in terms of time and effort to ensure that this project is a success. Our family will work on the installation of fences and planting, and as he is able our ranch manager, Bob, will lend time and/or the use of heavy machinery to complete the project. Bob has already identified a nearby ditch in need of clearing that can be used as a source of transplants for use on the bank treatments.
We truly appreciate your consideration in the funding of this project. We recognize how special this place is to the Bitterroot Valley and are happy to be a part of something that will have a lasting legacy for the area and downstream.
Sincerely,

Paula M. Wetzsteon

Paula Wetzsteon

BITTER ROOT LAND TRUST

September 19, 2016

Water Protection Bureau, Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: Robert Ray
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

RE: Bitter Root Land Trust's (BRLT) Support for Stream Restoration on Lazy J Cross Ranch

Dear Mr. Ray,

I'm writing in support of the Bitter Root Water Forum's (BRWF) proposal to complete a stream restoration project on the Lazy J Cross Ranch in the Sula Basin. BRLT is committed to working proactively with landowners on voluntary conservation projects that insure the Bitterroot's water, wildlife, and working lands thrive for future generations. We worked closely with the Wetzsteon family for years to help them realize their conservation vision on the Lazy J Cross Ranch, which culminated in a conservation easement in June of 2015. As a result of these efforts, we are fortunate to have a strong working relationship with the Wetzsteon family, as well as a thorough understanding of the property. Based on our knowledge of the landscape and the landowners' dedication to the place, we strongly support BRWF's DEQ grant application to restore and enhance the East Fork of the Bitterroot River on the Lazy J Cross.

We began working with Sterling Wetzsteon in 2012 to help him conserve the Lazy J Cross Ranch, consolidate ownership, and pass it down to his heirs. Sterling's vision for the future of the Lazy J Cross inspired ten different funding partners to invest $950,000 to ensure the property is perpetually conserved and available for agriculture, fish, wildlife, and public hunting. BRWF's investment in stream restoration will further enhance the existing long-term investment in the Sula Basin and the East Fork of the Bitterroot River made by the Wetzsteon family and the local, state, national, and private funders who made the conservation easement possible.

Agriculture and fisheries enhancement are equally important conservation values of the Lazy J Cross Ranch. BRWF has been a responsive partner, creating a design that will improve the fishery and adjacent habitat, while developing a design that is consistent with the values and vision of the Wetzsteon family and works closely to respect Bob Wetzsteon's agricultural operation and management concerns.

BRLT is thrilled with this opportunity to build on the Wetzsteon family's strong land ethic. Fish, wildlife, hunters, anglers, and agriculture all stand to benefit from this great project. We are committed to continuing to play a partnership role in this project through our stewardship program and look forward to working closely with BRWF, the Wetzsteon family, Bob Wetzsteon, and other partners to insure this project's success. I strongly encourage DEQ's support for these restoration efforts. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions.

BOARD MEMBERS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gavin Ricklefs

FARM & RANCH ADVISOR

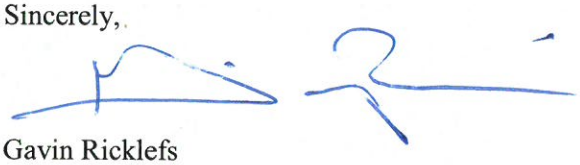
Rob Johnson, Ravalli County Extension Agent – *Retired*

PO Box 1806
Hamilton, MT 59840

406/375-0956 office
406/375-0925 fax

bitterrootlandtrust.org

Sincerely,



Gavin Ricklefs
Executive Director

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

9/22/2016

Water Protection Bureau, DEQ
Attn. Robert Ray
P.O Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Robert:

I am writing to support a proposal from the Bitterroot Water Forum to obtain funding, to help complete a riparian restoration project on the Lazy J Cross Ranch near Sula, Montana. The project, which is supported by the landowner, should improve riparian habitat along the East Fork Bitterroot River. The East Fork Bitterroot still supports fluvial bull trout that require cold water temperatures. Over the long term, this project should increase the shade on the River.

The Bitterroot Water Forum has been a responsible proponent of restoring riparian and upland watershed habitats. This project will continue that legacy.

Sincerely,

Chris Clancy

Chris Clancy
Fisheries Biologist.